

Assembly Joint Resolution

No. 16

Introduced by Assembly Members Campos and Alejo
(Coauthors: Assembly Members Allen, Ammiano, Beall, Bradford,
Eng, Fong, Roger Hernández, Hueso, Lara, Bonnie Lowenthal,
Monning, Perea, V. Manuel Pérez, Swanson, and Wieckowski)
(Coauthor: Senator Alquist)

August 16, 2011

Assembly Joint Resolution No. 16—Relative to McDonnell Hall.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL’S DIGEST

AJR 16, as introduced, Campos. McDonnell Hall: historic landmark.

This resolution would memorialize the National Park Service to declare McDonnell Hall a national historic landmark. This resolution would also urge the City of San Jose to similarly designate McDonnell Hall as a historic landmark.

Fiscal committee: no.

1 WHEREAS, McDonnell Hall played an integral role in the life
2 of Cesar Chavez during his time in San Jose; and
3 WHEREAS, McDonnell Hall was originally established by
4 Father Don McDonnell in the Sal Si Puedes barrio of San Jose as
5 a parish of Our Lady of Guadalupe; and
6 WHEREAS, Cesar Chavez was one of the first people to attend
7 the newly established parish. Father McDonnell became a great
8 friend and mentor to Cesar Chavez. Father McDonnell’s ideas
9 about applying basic Catholic doctrine to help migrant workers
10 and others suffering from social injustice inspired Cesar Chavez;
11 and

1 WHEREAS, Cesar Chavez later said of this experience that
2 “[M]y education started when I met Father Donald McDonnell,
3 who came to ‘Sal Si Puedes’ because there was no Catholic Church
4 there, no priest, and hundreds of Mexican-Americans. We were
5 some of the first members that joined his congregation for masses
6 in a little Puerto Rican hall that was just a broken-down shack. ...
7 We became great friends when I began to help him ... recite mass
8 in the bracero camps and in the county jail. We had long talks
9 about farm workers. I knew a lot about the work, but I didn’t know
10 anything about the economics, and I learned quite a bit from him.
11 He had a picture of a worker’s shanty and a picture of a grower’s
12 mansion. Everything he said was aimed always to solve injustice”;
13 and

14 WHEREAS, Father McDonnell also introduced Cesar Chavez
15 to Fred Ross. Fred Ross taught Cesar Chavez the principles of
16 organizing in general, and in particular on organizing based in the
17 local Catholic church; and

18 WHEREAS, It is strongly believed that Cesar Chavez started
19 “La Causa” in this eastside neighborhood of San Jose, which was
20 referred to by the residents as “Sal Si Puedes” or “Get Out If You
21 Can”; and

22 WHEREAS, Dolores Huerta, cofounder of the United Farm
23 Workers, has stated: “The farm worker movement started in San
24 Jose”; and

25 WHEREAS, In 2008, Congress directed the United States
26 Department of Interior to conduct a special resource study of sites
27 in California and Arizona that are significant to Cesar Chavez and
28 the farm labor movement, and to determine if any of those sites
29 should be declared a national historic landmark; and

30 WHEREAS, The National Park Service is currently conducting
31 that study and is expected to reach a decision in November 2011;
32 and

33 WHEREAS, The City of San Jose’s planning department is
34 currently reviewing a proposal to designate McDonnell Hall as a
35 historic landmark; now, therefore, be it

36 *Resolved by the Assembly and the Senate of the State of*
37 *California, jointly,* That the Legislature memorializes the National
38 Park Service to declare McDonnell Hall a national historic
39 landmark for its importance to the life of Cesar Chavez; and be it
40 further

1 *Resolved*, That the Legislature urges the City of San Jose to
2 designate McDonnell Hall as a historic landmark and to include
3 McDonnell Hall in the current Cesar E. Chavez Historical
4 Walkway; and be it further

5 *Resolved*, That the Legislature recognizes the importance of
6 McDonnell Hall to the farmworker movement in California; and
7 be it further

8 *Resolved*, That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies
9 of this resolution to the National Park Service and to the author
10 for appropriate distribution.